

"If we may use the word taro for a moment in a broader sense than the botanists would approve, there are three main types on Ifalik. The one that should not be called taro is the giant arum (file; *Alocasia macrorrhiza*) sometimes called in English by the Polynesian name kape. A second is the coarse yellow-fleshed pulaka (pulax, *Cyrtosperma chamissonis*) grown on atolls far and wide over the Pacific, commonly in artificial pits. The third is true taro, of the type favored on high islands (wot, *Colocasia esculenta*). This is smaller than the other two, and its leaves are rounded where their come to three points. Its flesh is finer-grained, gray in color with a purplish cast.

The giant arum of file is less exacting in the matter of soil than the others. It grows rankly about the edges of water-holes or, apparently, wherever it can get plenty of moisture from below. Though the natives plant it and weed around it, they eat it much less than the others. (Tom said this was a matter of individual taste, and possibly we did not happen to observe households particularly fond of file.) Two reasons were given for this. One is that not all women know how to prepare file properly. A good deal of the outside must be taken off, for one thing. If it is not properly prepared the minute spicules in it will bite the tongue and throat. The other reason is that 'If a man eats file, he won't catch any fish.'

Pulax is the type grown in greatest quantity in the Falālāp taro swamp (nibwel--to

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distinguish from niwel, which means forest or 'bush'.) Everybody on either island has a hereditary right to share in at least one patch in this swamp.

Wot is grown in smallest quantity, apparently because it requires most cultivation. Though highly esteemed, it does not seem to be preferred to pulax to any such extent as on high islands, where pulax may be considered fit only for areas where nothing better will grow. Young leaves of wot, tenderer than those of pulax and filē, are chopped up, stripped of their ribs and cooked for greens. "

"Though bananas (wir) bear well, and the fruit of some of the varieties seemed to us of excellent quality, the people have a rather low opinion of them as food. They are sometimes eaten, either raw or cooked; but do not compare in importance with breadfruit or taro.

The number of other plants used for food is considerable, but none of them, nor even all taken together, make up an important part of the diet. Arrowroot (mogmog; Tacca leontopetaloides) grows wild under the breadfruit trees. The people know how to make starch (mwisi) out of the roots but rarely take the trouble to do so. We never saw the process or any of the product. Sugar-cane (wou; Saccharum officinarum) is planted on or near house platforms. Children, and more rarely adults, enjoy chewing a piece of the stalk. But one or two clumps are enough for a household.

A plant said to become important in case of famine following a hurricane is gop (Portulaca samoensis). The tiny succulent leaves are washed in sea water, then boiled in fresh water, then crushed with the coral pounder and mixed with coconut cream.

Several plants of European introduction are grown to some extent: squash (a summer squash or marrow), papaia, pineapple. The squash and papaya plants are common, but bear very little, and that of miserable quality. Pineapples are very scarce. I can not recall seeing a plant on the island, but we were offered one fruit, quite a good one.

Fruits of several native trees are eaten, but not especially prized. Those named to me were avūs (Crataeva speciosa) and song (Bruguiera conjugata). The nuts of kazās

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(Terminalia catappa?) are enjoyed by small boys enough to induce them to crush the thick, fibrous hulls.

Young leaves from the tips of the branches of a full-sized tree, the aroma (Pipturus argenteus) are said to make edible greens if boiled, mashed, and mixed with toddy and coconut cream. "

" Native Timber Trees

Names of other trees used for timber, with more specific notes on the uses, follow:

aro-Straight shoots used for palings on house walls, or slats on canoe platforms; saplings used for canoe poles; large trunks for house posts.

gaingei-Proverbially strong. Used for some of the small pieces of canoe outrigger attachment. A favorite for levers, poles, walking sticks.

kelau, kalua-First choice for house posts. Said to be very durable in the ground.

kili-A small tree. The tough wood is used for canoe paddles and smaller house timbers.

lel-House timber.

mog-House timber.

ragēs-(Also called sevāng and vitou) canoe end-posts and outrigger booms.

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sol-House timber.

treli-a hard wood with various uses; its forks favored for the forked sticks attaching outrigger floats to booms.

wutu-House timber.

tria-Hard, straight-grained wood used to make men's combs. "

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"The following list of plants used for medicine was obtained during the general survey of plants and their uses. Many remedies are hereditary secrets, so the list is certainly not complete. As will appear in the list of rituals seen (p. 184-6), the main emphasis is not on herbal remedies, but on getting supernatural help.

angorlk-aromatic herb, put in medicine ritually prepared, blessed by the gods, and drunk as a preventive. Also considered healthful in drinking water for babies.

aro-a green leafy branch is waved over the medicine as part of the ritual, dipped in the bowl, and used to sprinkle these who are taking part.

bwogorewau-an aromatic sedge that grows in the taro swamp. Said to be very good for the stomach, if taken in coconut juice. Used in babies' drinking water.

korax-Herb. Used medicinally; no details obtained.

livaltis-Tree. Bark scraped, put in coconut fabric, strained into water for babies to drink.

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olu-Leaves wrapped in coconut fabric and soaked in water, which is then drunk to help stomach trouble and loss of appetite.

sol-Some men know (informant did not) how to make a medicine from this tree to cure a red eruption on the skin.

song-Bark scraped, put in coconut fabric and strained into water for babies to drink.

ualomax-A vine. Infusion of leaves drunk for stomach. "

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"Both men and women, but especially men, are fond of wearing flowers on the head, about the neck, or in the hole in the lobe of the ear. A few kinds such as the red hibiscus, are worn for color only; but fragrance seems to be even more prized.

angorlk-(turmeric) The crushed leaves are rubbed on the skin, hung in the ear-hole, or worn wherever they will hang. Especially fragrant when [44] partly dried. One of the plants beloved of the gods, which grows in the sky as well as on earth.

aro-This tree, whose leafy branches are used in ritual, has also a fragrant flower.

atogobwei-A vine. Lovers are said to rub the leaves on their necks to sweeten their embraces.

Flērōs-(Red hibiscus). For color only.

gióp-(Spider lily). For form, color, and fragrance.

guruguru-Herb with aromatic root.

Kerriō-Bush with clusters of small flowers used in garlands.

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raguēs-(also called geval and sevang) fragrant flower.

remag-(also called natu) Flowers worn in hair, or used for garlands.

seuru-(Plumeria) For color as well as fragrance.

waryng-An herb with aromatic leaves, grown on house platforms. The gods grow this in the sky.

wutu-The long-tubed white flowers of this tree are prized for their fragrance. This, too, grows in the sky."

"Miscellaneous Uses of Plants

Leaves of two ferns are used for the scanty covering which young girls tuck under their belts before and behind. One of these, riri, is especially common about the base of coconut trees, and among the moss that covers some of their aerial roots. It is worn green. The other, enènux, a bird's-nest fern, is cured in the sun before wearing.

Root fibers of two plants are used for fish lures. The root of the guan, after the outer layer is removed, is soaked in salt water, bleached in the sun, then split into narrow strips, which are tied to the shank of a fish hook. This lure, called uelueliöp, gleams in the water and is said to be very effective. The white fiber of a bunch grass or sedge called bogo li le pā is used in the same way.

The inner bark of the aroma tree is said to be so tough that fish can not bite through it. After being dried in the sun, it is sometimes attached to a hook as a leader.

The aerial roots of the giliao, a banyan, are sometimes used for preliminary lashing on a canoe, before the permanent lashing of sennit cord is put on.

A dried moss is sometimes laid between the planks of a canoe. It is said to [45] decrease leaking. This was not done, however, in any of several canoes built during our stay on the island."

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"The following plants were dismissed as weeds ('blong nothing'):
atilt, a small herb.

buyol-The creeping grass which is the great pest of the taro swamp.

kamarag-Staghorn fern, apt to overrun the ground under the breadfruit trees.

Keisis-also kevakual. Small herbs.

talingilipat-mushroom or fungus--'Many kinds, one name'."

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"The visible trappings of religion on Ifalik, like nearly all their artifacts are extremely simple. The so-called 'house of the gods' at Weluāra differs neither in appearance nor use from any other dwelling. The most distinctive building on the atoll, the men's house at Katēlū, has indeed some religious significance. The equipment for Maroligar's special ritual, described on p. _____, is kept there, and a cloth commonly hangs on the front wall as an offering to a god. But the symbolism of this building, as shown in the chapter on government, emphasizes human rank and authority more than religion.

Most conspicuous of religious emblems are what I have called shrines on some of the house platforms, just outside one end - the western end in every case I noticed - of a dwelling. These are little round flower-beds, about a yard in diameter, spread with clean, smooth sand that contrasts with the coral gravel of the rest of the platform. They are called tariaga (once recorded as tariege), but if Tom and I managed to understand each other on this point, the general word for flowers (mware), is also sometimes applied to them. The plants grown on them emphasize verdure and fragrance rather than blossoms: the large 'elephant-ear' leaves of true tar (wot) also prized as food; an occasional sprouting coconut, with leaves two or three feet high; and various aromatic shrubs, such as warung. During a ceremony the greenery was supplemented by a whole fresh coconut leaf and a leafy shoot of aro, stuck into the sand.

Most elaborate of these shrines is that for the great gods at Weluāra. In addition

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to the plants, four rods called guruguru, the general name for walking-stick, are stuck into the sand, projecting to various heights. There is one each for the four great gods: Aluelap, Lugeilang, Wolfat, and Tiliir. They are painted or dyed in various colors: one red, one white, one in broad horizontal bands of alternating flame-color and a very dark green, nearly black. The pigment for the flame-colored bands is the prized rang or baked turmeric, imported from one of the high islands. "

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"Besides water and milk, the infant is fed some special medicine twice a day--morn-
ing and night--for the first three months. This medicine is a concoction of water in
which are mixed the leaves of the ragnz, galua, and karavwan trees. This medicine is
given to make the baby's 'stomach very fine. '"

Mostly About Food

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able to observe on Ifaluk. Meal hours had no fixed time. There was generally only one large meal in a day, but the time of day at which this was eaten seemed to vary with the whim or convenience of each particular household. The time of toddy-collecting, however, was as unvarying as the sunrise and sunset with which it coincided; and every young man dropped whatever else he was doing at those times to carry out his chore.

Officially, the toddy was always used fresh on Ifaluk. As Ted had found during his first visit to the island, the chiefs had decreed prohibition. They had observed the effect of alcohol on the peoples of some of the neighboring and more Westernized atolls, where the people had easily learned how to distill the fermented toddy into really potent stuff, and they had decided that for the peace and security of the island it would be best if even fermentation were not allowed.

But toddy ferments easily and quickly. We noticed at some of the dance rehearsals an occasional older man with a definitely unsteady gait or a tendency to be too loud or too obvious, and concluded that he had allowed some toddy to follow its natural course by leaving it sit for a day. We had no direct evidence of the violation of prohibition, however, until toward the end of the summer when Tom offered us a sip from his bottle.

The stuff tasted very good to me, though perhaps I am no judge since my taste in alcohol is catholic. It had a pleasant, cider-like tang with, I should judge, about the strength of good beer.

Breadfruit, the two kinds of taro, and coconut, then, were the basic vegetables of the atoll. There were also a number of minor crops—especially papayas and several kinds of bananas and plantains. The papayas were fair, the bananas excellent, but they seemed to be little used by the people. We were often brought cooked green papayas, which have a squash-like texture and taste, and this seemed to be the way they were most commonly used. We were kept constantly supplied with bananas—we always had a bunch or two hanging to ripen in the Fan Nap—but the people seemed to consider them to be children's food. They appeared to prize the banana plants more for the fiber they got from the stem than for the fruit.

Fish formed the basic animal food, but the people also had pigs